

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Rural Development is now accepting loan and grant applications for six programs targeted at helping small towns and rural residents finance infrastructure improvements.

"The rural development programs are very important to the Central Coast and have been used to finance projects that have improved lives in many of our neighborhoods," said Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel). "I encourage groups and individuals to apply for these programs."

Between 2001 and 2006, Rural Development loans and grants in California totaled more than \$2.3 billion.

The six programs under which applications are being accepted are:

- **Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program**, created to improve access to education and medical services through technology.
- **Digital Public Television grant Program**, which provides funds to help rural public televisions stations install digital transmission equipment by February 17, 2009.
- **Community Connect Grant Program**, which provides grants to telecommunications providers and municipalities to finance installation of broadband service in rural communities.
- **High Energy Cost Grant Program**, which provides grants for the acquisition, construction or improvement of energy generation, transmission or distribution facilities in communities where the average residential cost for home energy exceeds 275 percent of the national average.
- **Revolving Fund Grant Program**, which provides funds to non-profit entities for loans to finance predevelopment costs for water and wastewater projects, or for short-term capital projects that are not part of the regular operation and maintenance of current water systems.
- **Household Water Well System Grant Program**, which helps individuals finance the cost of household water wells.

"These loans, grants and loan/grant combinations will help communities provide

essential services and maintain the infrastructure necessary for businesses and residents to enjoy a high quality of life in rural areas," said Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr.

Online grant applications can be filed at www.grants.gov . Deadlines and submission information:

- Public TV Digital Conversion Grant Program, deadline March 28, 2008, contact B. Allan, 202-690-4493.
- Community Connect Grant Program, deadline March 28, 2008, contact Kenneth Kuchno, 202-690-4673.
- High Cost Energy Program, deadline March 28, 2008, contact Karen Larsen, 202-720-9545.
- Revolving Fund Grant Program, deadline March 28, 2008, contact Anita O'Brien, 202-690-3789.
- Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan & Grant Program, deadline April 14, 2008, contact 202-720-0413.
- Household Water Well Grant Program, deadline May 31, 2008, contact Cheryl Francis, 202-720-1937.

For complete details on eligibility rules and application procedures, consult the Federal Register for January 28, 2008, pages 4778-4815.

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